

Food service soldiers mix up recipe for success at USAREUR competition

Story by
Master Sgt. Lisa Hunter
1st Armored Division PAO
Photo by
Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava
222nd Base Support Battalion PAO

The sweet smell of success is wafting out of Baumholder-area dining facilities for two 1st Armored Division food service soldiers.

Sgt. Brian Crump of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery (MLRS) Regiment, and Spc. Jousa K. Rine of 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment, took top honors as the U.S. Army Europe Food Service NCO of the Year and Specialist of the Year, respectively.

"The Cook of the Year is an incentive awards program designed to recognize food service specialists and noncommissioned officers for outstanding achievement," explained 1AD's Food Service sergeant major Sgt. Maj. Brenda Parks.

The competition is conducted in the same way that soldier and NCO of the month boards and promotion boards are. The soldiers, clad in Class A uniform, report to a panel of senior food service specialists. The panel members ask the soldiers questions pertaining to food service operations in both the field and garrison environments, as well as general military knowledge questions, according to Parks.

"Studying was the most difficult part for me, just trying to retain all that knowledge," said Crump.

Crump attributes his success to his dedication, application of his military knowledge and his ability to teach younger soldiers. At 34, Crump has set his goals on becoming a warrant officer or retiring as a sergeant major, but in the meantime, he's focusing on passing on his knowledge to younger food service specialists.

"A lot of these soldiers are out here on their own for the first time; so, I try to bring them under my wing," said the Emmett, Idaho, native. "I tell them, 'Don't be afraid to ask questions. Respect each other, your elders and NCOs. Use common courtesy. Do the work. Get the job done and you'll make it through.'"

The food service soldiers begin by competing at the quarterly brigade-level boards. Once they win there, they progress to the division board. The winners of the division's Cook of the Year competition then progress



Sgt. Brian Crump of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery (MLRS) Regiment, serves up a noonday meal at the 1-94 Field Artillery Dining Facility. Crump won the title of USAREUR Food Service NCO of the Year.

to the V Corps competition and, if successful there, continue on to the USAREUR competition.

"Competing at these boards gives them a reason to acquire a lot of technical knowledge and to hone their basic soldier skills," Parks explained. "Overall, they come out of this a more professional soldier."

The information they study for the boards help them in other aspects of their careers, according to Rine.

"The stuff you are studying, 90 percent of it is applicable to your daily duties," said Rine, who also won two gold medals in the USAREUR Culinary Arts Competition and was selected to compete on the USAREUR team.

Rine, who is prior service, also won the Fort Campbell, Ky., Cook of the Year competition in 1995. Rine competed this year as a means to prepare him for his promotion board. The tactic worked: Rine earned 150 points on his board, a perfect score.

"These soldiers have had a lot of support from their immediate supervisors and from their brigade-level leadership," Parks said. "They have become more active in preparing these soldiers for the boards."

Rine, a Tampa, Fla., native is already receiving recognition for his achievements.

"I've had some pretty good opportunities since the competition," said Rine.

In addition to competing on the USAREUR Culinary Arts Team, the 26-year-old cook was selected to work for the USAREUR commander, Gen. Montgomery Meigs, in Heidelberg. But, Rine has even higher aspirations. For now, Rine is focusing on getting promoted and submitting his Food Service warrant officer candidate packet. He also plans to complete his degree in Political Science and work as a senatorial aide on Capitol Hill, but not until he retires from active duty.

Presently, the USAREUR board is the end of the competition road for these soldiers; however, many senior food service soldiers are lobbying for an All-Army competition, according to Parks.

But their knowledge and experience doesn't go to waste. In the same way that these soldiers add a few spices or change an ingredient to make a recipe even better, they follow Crump's example. They spice things up, add an extra pinch of training and a dash of motivation to improve the recipe for success for next year's candidates.